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DIT Bolton Street Students' Union

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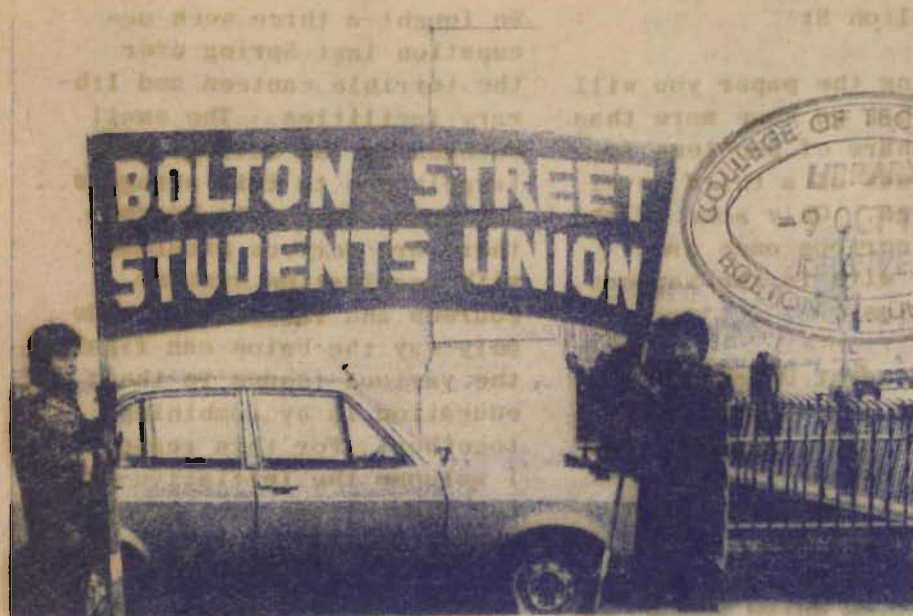
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st union

THE STUDENT/APPRENTICE

Newspaper of Bolton St. Students' Union

Vol.2 No.1 Sept '80



...The Lower Corridor?



Alternative Study Facilities?

TRAVEL

The U.S.I.T. Student Travel Card costs £3.50p (yes, it's gone up) and the C.I.E. Travelsave stamp £3.00p. and are available in the Union office (from 1st October). Bring along one mug-shot (photo). Remember the Travelsave stamp only entitles you to half the one-way fare and only if that is more than £2.00p.

The card is available to:

1. Full-time students.
2. Block release apprentices.
3. Day release apprentices doing a recognised apprenticeship (i.e. not a sandwich or refresher course). The details of this have yet to be ironed out.
4. Part-time professional students who study one full day and some nights. This does not include night-time students and again the details have yet to be worked out.

The "Scholar" card is now defunct. These cards will only be available from Bolton St. Students' Union office and only while the student or apprentice is attending classes in the College.

First year students should note that the Bank of Ireland offers a voucher with which a student travel card can be purchased, if the student opens a deposit account with £20. A.I.B. offer a similar scheme but their voucher will not be accepted by the Union. (Because A.I.B. have broken a specific agreement with U.S.I.T.)

It should be exchanged for cash at the banks itself.

President's Forward

I would like to welcome all the students and apprentices back to the College or if this is your first year welcome to Bolton St!

Reading the paper you will see that we have more than our share of problems for students of a third level college. Only some of the more serious ones are dealt with in the various articles.

The Student Union which was in a very weak state at the start of last year is in the process of being rebuilt by the students. They found that they needed such a defence organisation which would take

whatever action was necessary in order to defend their interests as students and apprentices.

We fought a three week occupation last Spring over the terrible canteen and library facilities. The small changes in the College are largely due to this struggle. But much remains to be done, there are serious problems with examination systems, courses and facilities. The only way the Union can fight the various issues in their education is by combining together. For this reason I welcome the initiative of the apprentices in starting their committee.

Brendan Doris

Facilities

It takes about ten minutes to size up the situation here in the College. For students and staff the facilities are quite simply bad! Apart from overcrowded, noisy classrooms the staff have to work twenty and more to a room due to the lack of offices. The workshops are badly equipped and there are not enough of them. In short the College is half the size it should be for the total of 7,200 students and 500 staff expected to work in it.

The reasons for the present position are complex. The VEC is locked in a twelve year struggle with the central authorities over control of third level education in Dublin and this more than anything else has contributed to the running down of the V.E.C. Colleges in Dublin.

However, there seems to be some movement this year. The authorities have acquired

new premises, an old warehouse to alleviate the overcrowding in the apprentice area. Plans are being drawn up for extensions and replanning. The apprentices canteen in the Linenhall is to be extended later in the year.

While minor changes in the Canteen/Common room in the main building will help somewhat, the problem of the lack of social/relaxation space still remains. There is no place for large public lectures, concerts, parties and no adequate library. The students and staff have serious problems associated with limited car/bicycle parking and constant thefts.

This year we must step up our demands on the education authorities for a decent education establishment in which to study.

UNION OFFICE

The student common room is located in the basement of the main building. There is a shop and pool tables in it and the Union office is behind the shop. We hope to have a second shop in the Linenhall this year.



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"Pedro and I are thinking of bringing out
a quarterly newsletter."

Obituary

NEILL SWORDS

All of us connected with Bolton St. were shocked to hear of the sudden death, earlier this summer of Neill Swords. Neill was popular in every quarter. He was a diligent student and he applied the same commitment to his work for the Student Union. Indeed, he was to have been the editor of this year's paper. As any of his classmates will testify, the crack was never dull while he was around. We will all miss him.

Tommy Graham

EDITORIALS

We were Right to Fight!

For years we were told that we couldn't have a chef in our canteen. The College authorities told us so. Some of the students even even said it. Well, now we have a chef.

Seemingly, miracles take just a little longer in Bolton St. But, whatever the cause of the delays in improving the canteens - seven years of delays - one thing is sure, without our occupation nothing like the changes the authorities have carried out would have occurred.

When the Union leadership stopped being the 'pet-poddles' of the College authorities and believing in their every sob story the atmosphere began to change. The students of our Union were never prepared to put up with the atrocious facilities in all areas or with their colleagues being failed unjustly in their exams. But without a genuine Union, a defence organisation of the students, there was little they felt they could do.

Last year we set out to build such a defence Union in this college. We have established beyond a doubt that unless the students are prepared to actively defend their interests nobody else will.

WE ARE RIGHT TO FIGHT! ■

It IS Our Concern!

When a student is refused the results of his fourth year final examinations because the authorities have no evidence he passed his first year, then we are concerned!

Last year the Acting Principle, Mr. Kevin Fox, threatened the Union President, saying that the authorities "wouldn't tolerate any interference in the examination system", by students or staff. Well, whether the authorities 'tolerate' it or not we will winterfere' (if that is how they see it) with a system which results in blatant injustice towards this student or any other.

Nearly two-thirds of the final year Architectural students did not pass their exams last summer. Some failed, others didn't complete the year. This is not good enough! Neither is it good enough that the authorities try to explain away this result with statistics.

The examination system, the way courses are run, the content of those courses are very much the concern of the students and their Union. The authorities of the College will have to pay attention to our grievances on all academic matters - one way or another. So far they have shown no inclination to take our views seriously. ■

U.S.I. Training Conference '80

At a joint meeting of this year's and last year's Executive before the summer break, the President was instructed to keep as much contact with other colleges as possible, with the view to getting Bolton St.'s point of view across and generally discussing the situation within U.S.I. It was felt that not enough open discussion was taking place and that, in fact, last year's leadership of U.S.I. had actually stifled it.

It was in line with this mandate that the President and the Communications Officer attended the annual Training Conference at Maynooth a month ago.

The first topic on the Agenda was the role of U.S.I. and of Students Unions. Our worst fears were realised, however, when, after a lengthy address on the subject by U.S.I. President, Gerry Grainger, not enough time was allowed for meaningful discussion to take place. This was all the more infuriating because Bolton St. had prepared a lengthy and detailed document on "the theory and practice of a Students Union", which wasn't openly discussed although it was in great demand and had obviously excited much interest. Indeed, Bolton St., apart from U.C.G. were the only College to submit a document on any subject.

The discussion on the Financing of Education suffered a similar fate. Lively discussion did take place after the lectures on "Peace, Jobs, Progress" (Northern policy) and "International Affairs" but only after delegates had insisted. The same excuses were used by the leadership to stifle debate from the "we're behind schedule" line to the "this is a Training Conference and not a Congress". What rubbish!

(More on these two issues in later papers).

One last gripe concerns a decision by all present at a lively discussion on the appalling accommodation situation to take out a full page advertisement in the national press highlighting the situation. Nothing has been heard of this since and the short letter written to the press by the Deputy President of USI, Liam Whitelaw, is hardly a satisfactory substitute.

Apart from these drawbacks the Training Conference had much to recommend it. The relaxed atmosphere, amongst the student delegates themselves, which lacked the divisiveness so often evident at Congress, promoted some good private discussion and from that point of view the conference was a great success. And of course the direct training aspect was very useful, especially for the smaller, less organised unions. Of these the most interesting session was on "disputes and negotiations" in which students had to act out certain roles in a negotiation set-up.

An extraordinary meeting of National Council was also called to elect representatives for the Constitutional Review Body (of USI). As it was inquorate this election was put back to the October monthly meeting. In conclusion, a word of thanks to Maynooth, our hosts.



LOST PROPERTY?

An amount of property, mainly from last year's abandoned lockers, has accumulated in the Union of-fices. If not collected before mid-October it will be dumped, sold, incinerated. There's some stuff in the Library too and a similar fate waits it. So there!

The Examination System is a HAZARD !

This summer the Union has received a number of reports of serious obstacles being placed in the way of students by the most unjust examination system in the college.

Case 1: A student in the Construction Technician Diploma course was refused his final year results because the department did not agree that he had passed first year! Only the threat of legal action made the authorities come to a compromise that in no way acknowledged the injustice of their stand towards this student.

Case 2: A first year full-time Construction Economics student was told he had failed 4 subjects. This was then corrected and he was told he only failed two. He prepared for these exams and when went to sit his first repeat. At the repeat exam he was told that there was a mistake he had passed that one as well!

Case 3: In the final year of the Architectural Course the students who failed were told by more than one staff member and an external Examiner that they were 'unlucky', that the division between passes and failures was arbitrary!

Case 4: Most of 1st year part-time Construction Economics students failed their Construction Technology examination in the summer. But on the information they were given many of them couldn't have failed.

They were told that the summer exam. would be a written one (it was a drawing exam., in fact) and would count as a project. They did seven projects plus the exam. That would be eight projects

in all. They were never told that the exam counted for more than any of their projects. Some students went into the summer exam with the equivalent of 56% which would have guaranteed them a pass even if they got nothing for the exam!

DEMAND THE INFORMATION!

When assessment is in the form of continuous accumulative marking of projects then students have the right to know the precise mark they have got. In some Departments a C is a pass (50% or better) but in case 4 above the Lecturer assured the students that D was "at least 50%" in his marking scheme.

Every student should be given the precise criteria in writing of what is expected of him or her in order to obtain a pass in an examination system. The Surveying Department is notorious for "changing the rules in mid-stream" as it obviously did in case 4 above. Despite the Departments assurance that they would issue the students with the assessment schemes in writing they didn't or where they did it wasn't precise enough.

Thirdly, every student should have the right to see his corrected script and examine it against the model answer made out by each Examiner. Only then can we be certain that we are not at the mercy of a vague and arbitrary examination system.

Without information, which is our right, no change

can be fought for. So demand the information first!

THE APPEALS SYSTEM

The Examination Appeals Board is made up of a sub-committee of the Joint Academic Council drawn from the senior academics of all VEC colleges. They will consider an appeal (if you pay a fiver!!) subject to at least you proving one of the following:-

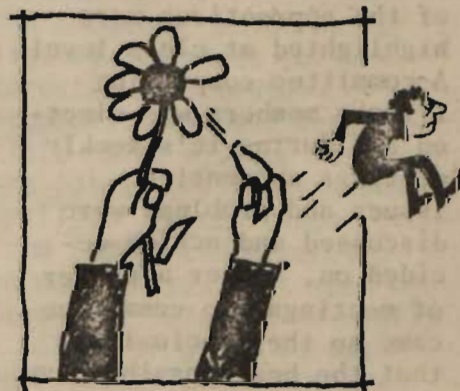
(a) That the exam regulations have not been properly implemented in your case - you would need to know the regulations and see your script in order to be the least bit scientific in your appeal.

(b) The exam. regulations do not adequately cover your case.

(c) Compassionate circumstances - loss of an arm in the middle (not immediately before) your exam!!

Clearly this system is a sham and is incapable of justice. Nowhere does the question of the justice of the examination regulations arise in such a system.

Clearly, the students need to find out much more of what is really going on and they can be assured that the cases here are the tip of the iceberg.



Strictly scientific methods, my boy! You failed!

We Apprentices Need to Build Our Committee !

For the past number of years apprentice self-representation, with regard to issues concerning themselves in Bolton St., has almost been non-existent.

This is probably due to a number of factors, one of the major ones being the general apathy of apprentices themselves. However, this apathetic attitude can be attributed to the fact that the actual amount of time that an apprentice spends attending the College in a year is considerably small. An apprentice who spends one day a week for thirty six weeks, or a block release apprentice attending for a three month period is less inclined to become actively involved in any body which represents his case. In the past year this situation has been altered.

During the '79-'80 term a group of day release apprentices expressed an interest in forming a committee composed of apprentices to look after our interests. This idea was followed through, with the help of the priests, during the classes which they held, and eventually representatives for each class were elected.

These were to meet on each day that they attended Technical College. Through this procedure grievances of the apprentices were highlighted at class level. A committee comprising fifteen members was elected and during it's weekly meetings apprentice issues and problems were discussed and action decided on. After a number of meetings the committee came to the conclusion that the best possible way to air their grievances and ensure the support of

the Linenhall Authorities, as had been earlier promised, was to arrange a meeting between representatives of the committee and Mr. Matt. O'Farrell, Principal of the Linenhall section.

Through this meeting apprentices received assurances regarding the improvement of canteen and toilet facilities and also obtained information on the possible introduction of general subject classes for apprentices in the evenings. However, this is not to say that the committee should remain silent on these and other issues during the present term and must regularly bring pressure to bear on the authorities in relation to the issues.

For the record it must be pointed out that the committee members were new to affairs in the running of such a committee and as a result the apprentice committee experienced a certain amount of shortcomings, including organisational difficulties. Because of this and for other personal reasons of individual members the numbers attending weekly meetings dropped to about seven by the end of the term.

Despite this, apprentices will endeavour to re-organise the whole apprentice committee set-up, and make certain that any shortcomings will be completely eliminated. It must be emphasised that it will be impossible for a handful of apprentices to accomp-

lish this alone and in order that the committee should be organised and function successfully, in a democratic manner, it must have the support and active participation of apprentices in Bolton St. Technical College. There is confidence that this can be achieved due to the fact of the considerable number of apprentices who expressed interest in becoming actively involved in the committee when it was being set up last term.

One of the first tasks of the committee, during this re-organisation period, should be the drafting up of a new list of aims and functions of the committee, which would have the two fold effect of laying down guidelines for the running of the committee, and in retrospect at the end of the term to clarify what should have been achieved by the apprentices.

For the purpose of getting a broad representation of the views of apprentices, there should be consultation with each class on what this "broad list" should contain.

Some apprentices may wonder at the need for an apprentice representative body and may ask "what's the point of forming a committee?" Others, outside apprentice circles, may state that there is no need for such a body as individual Trade Unions represent apprentice issues adequately. These queries and statements are answered thus and the latter type will be dealt with first; we agree that it is true that Trade Unions do endeavour to represent the

apprentice in the apprentice in the best manner possible. But because Trade Unions, for the most part, are preoccupied by other working class problems the cause of the apprentice can often be deferred. The presence of a committee ensures that apprentices are objectively aware of the problems which face them as a whole, and of the best way to tackle them. This awareness of problems can be channelled through the committee to the various unions and this can guarantee that unions act to deal with problems as effectively as possible. In principle an Apprentice Committee is not "anti-union" or "counter-union" and in fact to the contrary is very much in line with Trade Union movement thinking. In reality one of the roles of the committee should be to encourage apprentices to partake in

Union matters as far as they can. The committee should also attempt to educate apprentices to the role of Unions in protecting and furthering working class interests.

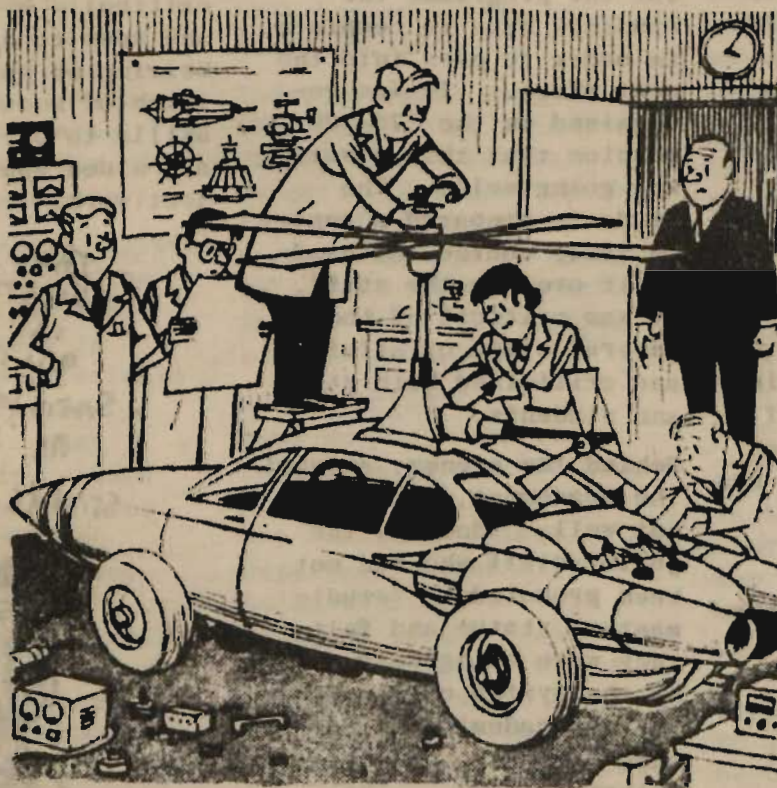
In answer to the question on the purpose of an apprentice body, it should be made clear that a body like that would be able to organise agitation on behalf of apprentices which would result

in concessions and better educational facilities being obtained from the College authorities. Such a committee could also gain the support of organisations, like the Students' Union and Trade Unions, which already play a part in protecting the rights of apprentices. Doing so would enable us to demand that these organisations represent our cause more effectively than before. Having a committee would give us a means of better educating ourselves, with regard to

it now stands has been mainly involved in matters solely confined to the Linenhall, it is hoped that in the future a committee representing a more widespread spectrum of apprentices, including those attending Kevin Street, could be formed. Following from this, even broader issues relevant to the position of the apprentice could be taken up.

As a final analyses, it must be stressed that the setting up of an apprentice committee is not the

imposing of a bureaucratic institution which lays down a new set of rules and regulations for the apprentice to comply with, and must not be regarded in the eyes of an individual in the light of "what can I get from it"? It should be viewed as a system whereby apprentices, as a section of the working class, tackle the problems and difficulties peculiar to that section, in an organised and most importantly of all collective manner!



" SOME DEPARTMENTS MAY OFFER SCOPE FOR CREATIVE WORK "

protecting and enhancing our basic rights, especially in relation to legal matters and major relevant AnCO plans or decisions. This would have the effect of building up and maintaining a strong united apprentice front, enabling immediate response whenever opposing major government on AnCO decisions with which we are not in favour.

Although the committee, as

DIGS

The Students' Union has a list of addresses for interested (desperate?) students. We have very few flats (3 or 4), the rest are 'digs' (full board generally). Prices range from £20 to £30 depending on whether you want spam or steak for tea. It is really a matter of going to the most suitable address and haggling!

The best of Luck!

What is Wrong in Architecture?

"With the possible exception of about three students I would have preferred to fail all or pass all", The French and External Examiner addressed these words to the final year students and some of the staff of the Architectural Department at an informal meeting after the publication of the results of the thesis examination last summer. He went on to explain that in his view the demarcation between those who passed and those who failed was so narrow that it was arbitrary. In addition, at this meeting the Examiners, staff and students agreed that the standard in the course was extremely low,

The points to note are firstly, the idea that an examination which supposedly assessed at least five years of hard graft could be arbitrary; secondly, that there could exist a situation at the end of any course wherein everybody concerned had no choice but to agree that it did not come up to standard. The writer of this article, a student of Architecture, is not advocating a 'witch-hunt' against any individual member of staff or even the head of that department. What has concerned him for some years, and concerns the students who passed or failed and those doing the course is why did it arise and what is the solution?

When the Union President met with the College Principal, Mr. O'Donnell before the publication of the results he stressed his concern, as a student representative, about the general trend towards collapse in that course. Sadly the trend, if not the final collapse, was confirmed. This view of the student President was based upon a large number of facts and observations, some of which are dealt with below.

A PALACE PUTSCH!

There are five years in the Architectural course.

Each year has a "studio master" in charge with overall responsibility for the programme the students have to complete in order to pass into the next stage. It was recognised in the '78/'79 session that things were not going well. The students prepared a report on their course and handed it over to the staff. It was critical of the general stage of affairs and criticised both staff and students.

Behind the scenes, amongst the academics, all was not well. Some of the junior staff who had not been promoted to "studio master" status and felt they were being held up by the system of "longstay" senior academics threatened to resign unless things changed. The students report was a very useful tool for them and most of the "studio masters" were changed. The former occupants of these positions were "promoted" (or demoted!) and were formed into a "roving team" with responsibility for the "development of the course".

What occurred in the summer of '79 in this Department was little more than a Palace Putsch! Despite a lot of hard work by some staff the basic problems were not tackled

and the change in personnel only papered over the cracks.

DICHOTOMY:

One problem in the course is the complete divorce between "subjects" and "projects". In students' minds and those of the staff the attitude is very much that "one can always repeat a subject in the autumn". Thus the tendency is very much one of students applying themselves to accumulating enough facts so that at the written exams these can be regurgitated. The 'facts' are absorbed uncritically by the students and seem to have little bearing on sound acquisition of knowledge or skills to be used in an all sided approach to project work.

The
system
is
quite
satisfactory
as it
stands



For instance the study of structures does not eliminate some of the absurdities found in some drawings by students. Beams are depicted so shallow, due to some 'aesthetic' notion, that any building constructed in such a fashion would collapse.

Building materials has not been taught on the course for years! True there is a subject in second year called Building Materials but due to the individual Lecturers basic inability to teach it, few go to his class and fewer bother to take his exam. In fact in recognition of the persistent problem with this subject the Department made the passing of the exam non-compulsory!

In first year maths, physics and chemistry are on the same course. But these subjects have more in common with a pure science course than Building Science which is what should be taught. Some of the maths and science department staff who service all the courses in the College, and some of the Architectural staff have long admitted this. But year after year it remains unchanged.

In fourth year "Economics" is part of the curriculum. However, on the admission of the Lecturer concerned he is not able to do anything like proper economics course with the students. The course consists of the endless generalities and teaches students very little.

For all but final year students there is a subject called "civilization studies". It consists of lectures on the "History of Art and Architecture in the Western World", on "Irish Art and Architecture" and

"Civilization". The lectures on Irish Architecture are few and far between and gloss over the subject but are "interesting". The main lectures in each year are given by a Lecturer who is more concerned with discipline and promoting his own neo-fascist views- fourth years spend most of the year studying the Spanish Fascist Architect Gaudi. He promotes theories such as "all people are greedy and degenerate" and that "in order to be a true artist one has to experience both homosexuality and heterosexuality"!?.

These are just some of the examples of inadequacies of the subjects taught. Far more can be said. The main point is there is a lack of integration of these subjects in the overall training of the Architect.

PSEUDO-SCIENCE

Many people, even students in Architecture have the idea that Architects are born not trained. The Department especially holds this view. Its approach to the training of the Architect is such as to underplay or completely ignore the role of the sciences of aesthetics, colour, structure, economics, maths, history, politics, sociology etc.

There is nothing god-given in the talents a student brings to his/her studies. They are socio-economic induced abilities which were acquired thro' family, school, cultural and other backgrounds. The role of the course, any course for that matter, is to build upon peoples' skills, develop new ones and train students as all round professionals, without serious deficiencies in knowledge or basic skills.

An architect can no more "do his own thing", in life, than a car mechanic.

NEPOTISM AND FEAR

In the course there is an attitude of fear. Fear of criticism, of self-criticism. When students' projects are put on the wall for examination it is supposed to be a learning process. But due to some idea of staff 'being out to get you' students participate in the sessions either in a very defensive manner, rushing to 'protect' their work, or passively. (Sometimes defence can be justified especially when the criticism is based on a staff members backward religious ideas).

Again students do not contribute fully when other student's work is being examined from some mistaken idea of 'loyalty to a friend'. While this atmosphere can be broken down it will only happen when the practice of nepotism in the course is eradicated.

In the recent past it was common for those students who helped illustrate a book for a staff member, or went on some extra-curricular programme, or even on a canoeing trip to develop the notion that he or she would find things 'easier' to obtain credits. This turned out to have some foundation in fact.

Such students' work would be superficially assessed so that 'pretty drawings' covered over a multitude of basic faults in design. For those students not in favour it could happen that the studio master wouldn't even approach them at work on the board. For one such student when his work was looked at he found the studio master more interested in reading the paper!

cont'd over.

COMPLACENCY AND CYNICISM

The course in Architecture had a reputation at one time for excellence, while its counterpart in UCD became something of a joke. When the Professor in UCD retired all the final year students got first class degrees! Now the boot is on the other foot.

While everyone admits that the standard has been falling here the Department contents itself with liberal reviews of the course that ignore the students completely. The Head of the course tried to explain away the bad results of last summer with statistics, and generalities that it was one of those things, or that students didn't approach their work right or that some had outside jobs. This is simply the world being described! What is needed is an explanation!

Shifting of staff around or other band-aid solutions go

nowhere near solving the problems arising out of the deterioration in the course. If no students turn up for studio or class, which would itself be unjustified, then the staff should. If staff have outside projects on they shouldn't let it interfere with their attendance in the college, as it has.

Above all the staff have to take the issue of the reorganisation of the entire course seriously. A seminar on the course between students and staff with proper reports must be held at the beginning of the year.

On the students side we have to combat cynicism.

Whether the Department, of its own self-motion holds discussions with the students, they themselves have to discuss their course. The attitude that one cannot be bothered with anything but 'getting to hell out of this place with my

piece of paper' will serve nobody - especially if the piece of paper loses its value. The high reputation of the Diploma will be lost completely (if it hasn't been already) unless the students themselves take a hand and insist that the course is sorted out completely.

The isolation of the Architects on the top floor from the rest of the student body, their 'elite' label is no protection against the realities of the situation.

CONCLUSION

The students of any course have a right to criticise their courses and to demand changes. The Departments must not be allowed to accept failure by any student as one of those 'things'.

Your views, letters, comments!
This article is intended as one in a series on the courses in the College - Professional or trade courses.

Fitting & Turning or..?

At the end of every block release course it is easy to find the 4th Years; they are the ones in the Bolton Horse having a few jars and thank God it's all over. Then it's back to the job; finish your time; get your Union card, and you're ready to take on the world. But are you? How well trained are you and how relevant is the course?

Of course the most obvious problem that afflicts Engineering trades apprentices is that suffered by all students in Bolton St: lack of finance. There are other problems, however, peculiar to this course. The main one is that it falls between the two stools of production and maintenance. The course closely follows the 12 year old syllabus which is designed to train "fitter/Turners", and within this strict definition it is quite adequate. Such an animal is a rare breed, however. The vast majority of "fitters" are involved in maintenance i.e., fixing other machines, while smaller number "turners", are engaged in production i.e., turning

out components on a lathe. There is also overlap between the two. The present course does not satisfy either. Whereas most production shop apprentices could turn out some of the lathe exercises blindfolded (don't try it lads!) many on maintenance might never see a lathe on the job. When in the College the instruction isn't always what it should be. It's quite often a matter of "here's the drawing, Phil will give you the material and there's the machine".

Another thing apprentices complain about is the excessive amount of bench-fitting (the use of file, hacksaw and other hand tools). The bench-fitting practical exam in the junior and senior trades is more an endurance test than a test of skill. Perhaps fitting could be confined to the junior stage, or maybe even just first year.

Problems arise in the other subjects (maths, science, etc.) but are mainly connected with the differing educational standards of the apprentices entering the course. The General Studies class tends towards condescending paternalism and doesn't help either. This is a general problem between

SOCIAL LIFE?

Yes folks, under the drab exterior of this complex of buildings there lurks subversive organisations. They are after one thing, the 'crack'. This surfaces occasionally (very occasionally) at 'parties' organised by the different course-based societies which include the:-

1. Architectural Students' Association (ASA).
2. Society of Student Engineers (SSE).
3. Student Society of Surveyors (SSS).
4. Society of Engineering Technicians (SCETS).
5. Student Society of Architectural Technicians (SSAT).
6. Student Society of Motor Industry Management (SSMIM).
7. Society of Student Aeronautical Engineers (SSAE).

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apprentices and the authorities.

Evidence of the inadequate course content can be seen in the large number of apprentices who feel it necessary to take City and Guild courses in the evening. But why is it necessary for this time and effort to be spent when an adequate course should be available during the day?

The Students' Union is not in the business of drawing up alternative syllabuses (for the authorities) but we hope some relevant questions have been raised and we welcome any contributions from apprentices or staff.

Other articles on this and other courses next paper.

The other activities of these clubs varies from the very serious engineers (industrial trips and seminars) to the riotous behaviour of the Architects on the now famous (infamous) "Flash Friday".

Also, there are, of course, societies open to all (that includes apprentices). The most notable last year were the:-

1. College Christian Society.
2. Music Society.
3. Natural Energy Society.
4. Film Society.

One must also add to the list societies badly in need of resuscitation like the:-

5. College Debating Society
6. Drama Society.
7. Cumann Gaelach.
8. Chess and Scrabble Club.

The only active political grouping in the College last year was the Bolton St. Fianna Fail Cumann.

Funds are made available to all these societies through the Students' Union depending on their needs.

SPORTS

The sports clubs had a very successful season last year. The rugby team won the Gleeson Cup, practically a Bolton St. preserve.

The soccer team, with a large contingent of apprentices, won the Donagh O'Malley Cup.

The handball and sailing club (yes, one does exist) also won their respective competitions.

The Gaelic football (and hurling sometimes) club, although trophless last year were never far from success. There also exist active clubs in orienteering and karate.

Where is 'Scoop'
McDonald
Ed.

SWIMMING

There is no swimming club as such but students can avail of Kevin St. pool. Unfortunately, a timetable is not to hand at the moment but will be published at the earliest opportunity.

GYM

The College has a gymnasium on the top floor of the Linenhall (which makes for some very interesting sound-effects in the classes below). It is available at lunchtime from 12.30 - 2.00 p.m. and in the evenings from 5.00 - 7.30 p.m. Further available times will be listed later. Mr. Doogan, the P.E. teacher is the man to contact here.

AN OPEN DAY

An Open Day will be held at a future (as yet unspecified) date, during which the various clubs and societies will display their wares and try to enlist, force and generally pressgang new members, so watch this space for further details.

WELFARE

Every student and apprentice should get their hands on the (free) '1980 Student Welfare Manual' available at the shop, and produced by the much-vaunted student services officer. Although full of useful information it also has its limitations and we advise any student or apprentice in trouble to contact the Students' Union. Also, the Union office has many of those forms that students and apprentices require (tax: medical cards: travel cards: J1 visas etc., etc.)

The Union's Finances

There are six third level colleges run by the City of Dublin VEC. These are the Colleges of Technology at Bolton St. and Kevin St.; the College of Commerce Rathmines; the College of Marketing and Design in Parnell Square; the College of Catering in Cathal Brusha St.; and the College of Music in Chatham St. The first five have active students' unions. They have varying sources of income. By far the largest proportion of money, used to run the unions, comes from members subscriptions. This money which is paid by the students, at the same time they pay their fees, is called "Capitation" money. Full-time students pay £14 and part-timers £4 this year.

In Bolton St., this year capitation will be about £15,5000. In 1972 the fee was £3. and £1; in '76 it was increased to £9 and £3. On both occasions the students' unions set the fee level for its members - at least that was the theory. But this year the fee has been arbitrarily increased by the VEC, without any reference to the unions at all! This makes nonsense of the whole principle that union dues are a matter for the members of the union.

HISTORY '71/'75

Prior to 1972 the unions were given a grant by the VEC towards the expenses of clubs and societies. But this was not a satisfactory arrangement. Firstly, it meant that the VEC only allocated money for the 'social' side of student activity but not the 'political' side. Secondly, such a system of financing the unions meant that the members made no direct contribution for the upkeep of the union. Thirdly, since it was a grant, the VEC could always cut it off if the unions made any serious protest against the authorities.

In 1971 the five unions asked the VEC to come to an agreement with them so

that the unions could collect dues from its members. The VEC appointed a Working Party to investigate how it could be done, legally and otherwise. This committee was composed of five students, five staff and an 'independent' chairman, Mr. Tom McCarthy, was very much a VEC 'man'.

The Working Party recommended that the VEC collected a 'capitation fee' from each student, at the time of registration, and that the money be paid over to the union. However, it also recommended that there should be a sub-committee set up by the VEC which would have the same structure as the Working Party to oversee the scheme. It was to receive a set of audited accounts and a budget FOR EXAMINATION. This committee was to be advisory and was to be called the Joint Student Union Council. However, the VEC changed the terms of reference of JSUC so that it had the powers not only to examine but also to approve the unions' budget and accounts.

It cannot be stressed too much that the VEC arbitrarily changed the terms of reference of JSUC. The students' unions at the time never agreed to this

change - it was imposed on them. The argument was that they had to agree or there would be no capitation scheme at all! This type of blackmail has been used many times since by the VEC. It is simply the classical "carrot and stick", being used by them to gain a measure of control over the unions.

In the beginning, Rathmines Kevin St. and Bolton St. unions objected to JSUC having any rights to approve budgets or accounts. They had only agreed to the setting up of JSUC in order to get around the VEC's insistence that they couldn't act as a collection agency for any other body. But when the VEC went to the Department for approval of the scheme, the Department agreed that this money was special. The Department made it clear that it would observe on its side the spirit of the agreement that the money was the students own money, paid by them to their unions. They said that they didn't want to get into any fights with the students over the capitation. While the Department of Education was prepared to go along with the VEC in the matter of independent financing of the students' unions the VEC was not!

Right from the beginning the 'independent' chairman of JSUC turned out to be anything but independent of the VEC. When the students demanded that the terms of reference of JSUC should be re-examined he refused to allow that discussion to take place.

Even when the Chief Executive Officer came to the meetings and gave JSUC the go-ahead to do so, he still

refused. But the point to note here is that while he refused, at that time, to allow JSUC to change its own terms of reference he has forced many changes on the unions since. The Joint Student Union Council which was set up originally as a consultative body to see that the money was spent as the unions wished it to be, it has since taken on many other roles mainly through the machinations of McCarthy, as chairman. He is one of the main bureaucrats in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

At the fourth meeting of JSUC the manner of interference in union affairs became clear when the Kevin St. budget was objected to by the CEO and payment of the money due to them was withheld pending the receipt by the VEC, of an explanation from the union. This was precisely what the unions feared, that no matter how the union might decide to spend its own money the VEC would block any proposal it objected to and therefore effectively remove much of the decision making from democratic student bodies, such as the Annual General Meeting - which is the supreme decision-making body of any union. Again in 1975 JSUC laid down that students' unions could not subsidise their shops with capitation money in order to lower the prices.

HISTORY '76/'80.

At the end of 1975 the unions wanted to increase the amount of the dues paid by their members but this only allowed the flood gates of interference to open even wider. Using the fact that they had to collect the fee, the VEC refused until the unions agreed to many more restrictions. The Chief

Executive Officer circulated a 'discussion paper' which was tantamount to taking the unions over. It laid down that the unions had to amalgamate into one big union, with a central office, a common accounting procedure, an administrator etc. It also laid down that the unions had to spend something like 50% on clubs and societies. Needless to say the unions objected. But in the end agreed to much of what the VEC stipulated because they were starved of funds.

The unions came out of the negotiations over a capitation increase with little of their autonomy left. While the capitation fees were increased to £9 and £3 the unions were only paid £6.98 and £2.33 respectively. The reason for this was that while the unions rejected political amalgamation they were forced to agree to an administrator being employed to oversee the financial side of the unions. This person was employed by the VEC but paid out of union funds!!! Also the unions now had to allocate 35% of their capitation to clubs and societies no matter what the students decided. And they all had to have a common accounting method.

This would have been bad enough but the full impact of these agreements (so-called) was not seen until later. For example, in the first year of the scheme no administrator was employed but the VEC deducted about £9,000 for the admin. post in all from the capitation fees of the five unions. The VEC refused to hand over the money and only reluctantly agreed to give back half of the £9,000 insisting that the rest was held by JSUC as a 'development' fund. The next year an administrator was employed.

Once in office he proceeded to 'develop' his post until it concerned itself not just with financial matters but also every aspect of student activity. This led to the complete revision of the terms of reference of JSUC from simple capitation matters to all sorts of issues not JSUC's business at all! When the common accounting manual was produced by JSUC it laid down many new areas of concern to JSUC. Not only is this manual more like a student union book of rules but it also gives the VEC the right to demand information from us about our shops and other financing activities apart from the capitation fee. The manual is obligatory.

Last year the real purpose of the capitation scheme, as far as the VEC is concerned, was clearly seen. When Bolton St. union objected to shop accounts and other information been given to the VEC their money was with-held for the year. Only when they agreed at the very end to submit the information under protest was the money paid over. Even then the VEC deducted £1,803 as a punishment for the students in that college carrying out a three week protest occupation over conditions in the college. THIS IS THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE SCHEME. IT IS NOTHING SHORT OF A BALL AND CHAIN ON THE UNIONS

LATEST HISTORY '80/'81:

This year the VEC has increased the capitation to £14 and £4. The students were not even asked if they wanted to pay more to their union. But just as in 1976, the unions will only be paid over £10 and £3. The rest of the money will be used to pay the administrative officer and set up what is called student services. The VEC is putting its hand into the students pockets in order to enhance its reputation in competition with the universities and NIHE.. These 'student services' cannot compensate for the loss of our autonomy! ■

A Union Programme?

While the programme for the year has to be discussed and adopted by a General Meeting, the following programme is being put forward by the Union President as a basis for discussion. The aim of this outline programme is to "Strengthen our Organisation" so that we can "Take up Every Student's Problems".

A. UNION ORGANISATION

(a) Apprentices

The union must take certain measures which will help to draw everybody into the life and work of the union. The appointment of a second full-time officer would be such a move. It is the only way that we would have a real chance of reaching apprentices and other part-timers.

(b) Capitation

The union cannot let the issue of its autonomy drop. The VEC fined us £1,803 last year, we must work with the other VEC unions to make them pay back this amount.

(c) Constitution

We need to bring our Constitution into line with our present needs. The existing constitution makes no mention of sabbatical officers; it gives the other officers too much work to do; it describes the union as a 'service' organisation instead of a 'defence' organisation and so on.

B. COLLEGE POLITICS

(a) Facilities

We still are without adequate library facilities in Bolton St. or Longford House. Other areas such as workshops, toilets and social facilities are totally inadequate and we have to press harder for improvements.

(b) Examinations

The examination system in at least four courses is full of pitfalls for the students and must be sorted out with the authorities.

(c) Courses

Many of the courses are not what they should be. The union has a responsibility to help the students make sure that the authorities act on this problem - they have shown no intention as yet of doing so!

C. NATIONAL POLITICS

(a) Finance for Education

Despite our own efforts to have facilities improved in Bolton St. the problem of lack of finance from central government holds true for all colleges. As one of the 63 unions in the Union of Students in Ireland we have to play our part in forcing concessions from the state. We have to work out the best way to participate in this major student issue.

(b) Student Support

Our students suffer similarly to those in other colleges from poor living accommodation at exorbitant rents. This issue is one of the many, such as grants, which is part of our demand for proper financial support for students while at college.

D. UNION POLICY

(a) U.S.I.

For some time our union has had serious criticisms of USI for its general impotence in the face of savage

government cuts, fee rises and lowering living standards. Our union has to take a clear stand on the role of USI and how it should go about its work in defence of the students nationally. We are specifically concerned with the manner in which Congress is organised.

(b) Finance for Education

We need to have our own view of how to approach the major issue for USI. The 'Finance for Education' campaign is supposed to be the major 'campaign' for the national union.

(c) Ireland

We didn't get very far last year in trying to establish a clear policy for this union on the situation in Ireland - especially the North. We said that we would come back to it and discuss USI's policy on Ireland: "Peace, Jobs, Progress".

(d) International

We, in this union, took a clear stand, last year, on the overall situation in the world. We put forward a policy at USI Congress of opposing both superpowers and their war preparations equally. The leadership of The Union of Students in Ireland has violated this mandate of Congress already on two occasions! If our policy is to have any meaning and Congress any standing as the decision making body of USI then we have to stand up and demand that it is fully implemented until it is changed.

Psst !



Insure your bike!

